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#### CHUPACABRA SUPERSTAR

● Mexico: The chupacabra saga continues. After sightings in Puerto Rico and Florida, the latest news come from Mexico. Chupacabra, a sort of vampire, is still shifting shape. In Puerto Rico, it was a reptile-like alien, in Miami a mixture of lizard and dog. I covered it once as a dragon under Behemoth and once as a mermaid-type in Isis, but it/he/she deserves a section of its/her/his own. In May, chupacabra was seen in Mexico as well as in Guatemala, so it seems the thing only surfaces in Spanish-language communities. In Mexico, it was variously explained as a being from outer space, or as the result of secret genetic engineering. Several witnesses have described a creature, or "monstruo", with wings, glowing eyes, fangs, a fur and talons. The bat-monster with red eyes kills turkeys, chicken, sheep and - mainly - goats, whence the name "goatsucker". According to some, it has also attacked humans. Chupacabra had been seen for months in Puerto Rico, which is always full of rumors about ET visitors and secret American laboratories, but in May, there were sightings and alleged victims on a nearly daily basis. Once, half a dozen goats were found dead, then locals reported unusual noises and footprints. In Naucalpan, a suburb of Mexico City, chupacabra molested a young woman. In the provinces, people lock their doors and nail boards in front of the windows. To the shock of secretary Carabias (probably Secretary for the Environment), bat caves were destroyed in several places. She has openly told the population that chupacabras does not exist. But witnesses and local people continue to believe in it. Zoologists explain the bites in the neck of farm animals as the work of coyotes, pumas or wolves, which are driven to feed on farm stock because of a continuing period without rain. While environmentalists like Julia Carabias try to quieten the people with rational explanations and the land people rely on rumors and panics, the town people, who are obviously slightly more cynical, have made chupacabra a media star. Although no photo or video exists which shows the thing, you may buy t-shirts with its image. Often, cartoonists use chupacabras to portray Carlos Salinas de Gortari, the ex-president in exile, showing him as a vampire with bat's wings. Several hit songs about chupacabras are on the radio, ranging from rap to more traditional merengue. In Naucalpan, a ringer has adopted the stage name "Chupacabras". There is a home page about the thing in the internet. The political opposition assumes chupacabras was invented by the government to divert people from thinking about the economical disaster in the state. And while sceptical journalists and zoologists see chupacabra as a Mexican yeti or Nessie, others think it is a mutation that generated in the growing piles of junk that line the Mexican streets. So we have a rumor that started in Puerto Rico, which has swept most of the Spanish-language communities of the region. Chupacabra has no form, only a function - it is the utmost terror, devil, vampire, even the hated ex-president (which some call "chupadolaes" (Dollar-catcher). All kind of phenomena can be ascribed to him - from kills to mutilations to sexual attacks. There are all kinds of explanation: rational, crypto-zoological, conspiracy, ufological, and even these come in rational and irrational guises. So you may believe in a government conspiracy about secret laboratories, or in a government using popular mythology to divert attention from its own inability. I can hardly wait how this develops, it is a mythology almost as encompassing as the UFO myth - everything you ever wanted to believe fits nicely in. My sources for this were two articles in the Stuttgarter Zeitung, 28 May 1996, p. 16; and Bietigheimer Zeitung, 22. May 1996, p. 4

#### BEHEMOTH

● Loch Ness: A Scottish couple, Kathy and Gary Campbell, have founded a "fan club" for Loch Ness monster enthusiasts. They had the idea after seeing the monster. Gary Campbell describes "something very large" breaking the water surface and then disappearing again. "I am convinced it was Nessie". Kathy Campbell had been working in a hotel at Loch Ness where tourists had often asked her if there were no club for fans of Nessie. So they decided to found one. (Reuter in Rheinpfalz, 22 May 1996, and Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 22 May 1996, p. 9) If the couple had been more knowledgeable in Loch Ness matters, they would have known that an excellent "club" for people interested in Loch Ness affairs does already exist,

Rip Hepple's Loch Ness Information Service (7 Huntschieldford, St John's Chapel, Weardale, Bishop Auckland, Co Durham, DL13 1RQ, UK).

- Bibliography: Several sightings were recounted in the last Nessletter (see address above), issue 125. -- Lake Bala monster: Fortean Times 82, p. 14 -- new picture of Loch Ness monster (lloks like water fowl to me): Fortean Times 86, p. 8. -- film of dino in Africa: Fortean Times 86, p. 32-35. -- A false report that the new British movie Loch Ness is based on the researches of Ted Danson (Le Matin, Lausanne, 5 February 1996, credit: Andreas Trottmann). -- Lake monster in New Britain (Fortean Times 82, pp. 38-39) -- crocodile spotted at Congleton, England (Fortean Times 82, p. 15)

#### KRAKEN

- A giant squid was caught by a trawler off Dingle, Kerry, Eire in April 1995 (Fortean Times 82, p. 7)
- Micheal Raynal has an article about Octopus giganteus, Florida, in The INFO Journal 74, p. 24-27
- According to a report in Die Welt, 30. April 1996, p.12, Clyde Roper will go fishing for giant squids off Chatham Islands. He has great hopes, for 3 giant squids have already been caught there (cf. last Bilk). These examples were between 4 and 8 metres in lengths (so the length of 22 metres, given in last Bilk, was a mistake for ft!). He will go down into a depth of 900 metres with a submarine. More and more detailed news about squid catching may be found in Fortean Times 87, p. 19, which also has colour photos of two of the squids caught.

#### USO

- England: Two British trawlers caught the German submarine U 29 off England's south west coast. The Kiel submarine had participated in a Royal Navy exercise 20 natic miles off Plymouth when it got entangled in the trawler's nets. (Göppinger Kreisnachrichten, 17 February 1996, p. 7)
- UFO hoax with alleged spaceship parking at Lake Tahoe, Nevada. (Fortean Times 86, p. 16) Lake Tahoe is also the setting for several lake monster sightings, which have been covered in Nessletter some years ago, if I remember correctly. -- Swedish USA explained as mink - Fortean Times 82, p. 14. -- Strange holes in ice cover of Swedish lakes, Fortean Times 86, p. 17 -- UFO sightings over Loch Ness (fortflash No. 3, p. 3)

#### CRYPTOZOOLOGY

- Two articles on CZ in major German magazines recently, both about the usual suspects, with some new discoveries mixed in, and run-of-the-mill psychological explanations. Kosmos (May 1996, p. 14 - 27) covered yeti, Loch Ness and new discoveries; Natur (June 1996, p. 20-28) the unicorn, ABSM, dragons, and referred to the new books by Ellis and Heuvelmans.
- A new species of monkey, about the size of a mouse, which had previously been thought to be extinct, was rediscovered in Wuyi-Mountains, Fujian province, China. It weighs only 200 grammes. (Welt 23 April 1996, p. 12; Stuttgarter Nachrichten, same date, p.8; Stuttgarter Zeitung, same date, p. 18)
- A fish with legs - see Fortean Times 86, p. 40

#### FORTEANA AND STUFF

- Attacks: A hippopotamus in the Sambesi River, attacked German tourists in a boat close to Victoria Falls. The hippo drowned one guide and tore the arm off another. (Welt 12 March 1996, p. 12) // At Susa, Fiji, a swordfish speared and killed a fisherman (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung 16 March 96, p. 8) // In South Africa, a crocodile killed a boy. (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 16 March 96, p. 7, Stuttgarter Nachrichten, same date) // Probably the same incident: In northern South Africa, a crocodile killed a 7-year-old boy in Mutshundudi River (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 21 March 96, p. 12)
- In the Shennongjia region, Hubei province, China, the yeti is to become a tourist attraction. A travel agent designs special tours. The province already has a yeti park and a yeti museum. For decades, there have been sightings of a 2.2 m ape and reports about footprints up to 40 cm in length. Despite many expeditions, however, there is still no proof that the creature exists. (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung 28 May 1996, p. 10)